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ABSTRACT

This symposium report on current child development research in Germany includes abstracts from papers presented at the biennial meeting of SRCD, April 1975, and a short overview of the history and present status of developmental research and training in Germany. According to this overview, developmental theory and empirical research, which had been the focus of attention in the early 20th century, experienced a complete decline during and after World War II, with a slow recovery during the 60's and 70's. Anglo-Saxon research and social demands have shaped this recovery, and today, German developmentalists appear to be especially sensitive to theoretical, methodological and meta theoretical issues. They also prefer to study more complex units of behavior within a broader scope than their American counterparts, considering this kind of research closer to socially and educationally relevant real-life situations. (GO)

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Symposium
presented at the Biennial Meeting of SRCD
Denver, Colorado, April 10 - 13, 1975

CHILD DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY - SEARCH FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Chair: Karl-Josef Groffmann, Ph.D.
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Universität Mannheim

Participants: Hellgard Rauh, Ph.D.
Universität Bielefeld

Rolf Oerter, Ph.D.
Universität Augsburg

Hannelore Grimm, Ph.D.
Universität Heidelberg

Klaus A. Schneewind, Ph.D.
Universität Trier

Ingeborg Wagner, Ph.D.
Universität Bochum

Discusaants: Paul B. Baltes, Ph.D.
Penn. State University,

Klaus F. Riegel
University of Michigan

PS008428

Symposium "Child Development Research in the Federal Republic of Germany" at the Biennial Meeting of SRCD, April 1975

As a new event within the Biennial Meeting, a German group presented four research projects to the American audience. The symposium "Child Development Research in the Federal Republic of Germany", as well as informal communications during the Meeting seemed to be the first step of better international cooperation between American and German psychologists.

Hellgard Rauh (University of Bielefeld) reported about aspects of history and present status of developmental psychology in the German speaking European countries. After developmental theory and empirical research had been the center of psychological attention in the first third of this century, there followed a total break-down during and after World War II. Today's German developmentalists appear to be especially sensitive to theoretical, methodological and meta-theoretical issues. They also prefer to study more complex units of behavior within a broader scope, for they feel this kind of research to be closer to socially and educationally relevant real-life situations.

Rolf Oerter (University of Augsburg) presented results about developmental changes in problem solving as a function of level of socialization. A particual task was constructed which was seen to be representative for some characteristics of every-day life. Three groups of different age were compared. The results confirmed the assumption that internalization of social structures, especially of the concepts of labour and of time, is a condition for adequate problem solving. While adults performed better in a task embedded in the social context, the juveniles had less difficulty in a task of identical structure but without the social context.

Klaus Schneewind (University of Trier) reported about psychological and socio-ecological aspects of parent-child relations. On the basis of a theoretical analysis of the major conditions and consequences of parent-child relations the following selected

findings of a long term research project were discussed: (a) relations between the parents' concept of the child's personality and the parents' self-perceived parental attitudes; (b) relations between parental socialization attitudes and a variety of the parents' personality variables; (c) relations between child-perceived parental attitudes and goals and various dimemsions of the child's intelligence; (d) relations between child-perceived parental socialization variables and the child's self-responsibility. The corresponding data analyses resulted in rather strong and within a cognitive social learning theory well-interpretable relationships.

Hannelore Grimm (University of Heidelberg) presented a research program on language development in children. The Research concentrates on the three main problems: syntactic, semantic and communicative development in children. The result about syntactic development are summarized in: Grimm, H., Schöler, H. & Wintermantel, M.. Zur Entwicklung sprachlicher Strukturformen bei Kindern. Weinheim: Beltz, 1975. With regard to semantic development, the purpose was to analyze developmental changes of word meanings and their influence on the production and the comprehension of semantically consistent and incondistent sentences. The results are summarized in: Grimm, H. & Wintermantel, M., Zur Entwicklung von Bedeutungen. Weinheim: Beltz, 1975. The research on communicative development was stimulated by Olson's theory of reference.

Ingeborg Wagner (University of Bochum) reported about "Reflection Impulsivity Re-examined: Analysis and Modification of Cognitive Strategies". The effect of different variables of instruction on changing impulsivity in problem solving behavior as related to different ages was studied. Four groups differing in reaction time and number of failures in the Matching Familiar Figures Test (MFF) were compared with regard to their strategies of visual information processing. It is proposed to study how adequately a special strategy fits the problem rather than to simply classify the children into impulsive and reflexive subjects. So a clear description of the situation and its special demands as well as a theory of individual differences in cognitive processes is needed.

History and Present Status of Developmental Psychology in the German Speaking European Countries

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From the onset of scientific psychology in Germany, the developmental dimension has been an integral part of general psychological thinking, originating from philosophical as well as biological concepts. After developmental theory and empirical research had been the center of psychological attention in the first third of this century, there followed a total break-down during and after World War II. More slowly than most other areas in psychology, developmental psychology has recovered in the sixties and seventies, heavily influenced by anglo-saxon research and by social demands. As opposed to most of their American colleagues, today's German developmentalists appear to be especially sensitive to theoretical, methodological and meta-theoretical issues, they are more inclined toward cognitive-developmental and personality theories tend to view them from a life-span perspective. They also prefer to study more complex units of behavior within a broader scope, for they feel this kind of research to be closer to socially and educationally relevant real-life situations.

At the SRCD Meeting at Denver, four larger research projects were presented to the American audience.

Symposium: Child Development Research in the Federal Republic of Germany
Search for International Cooperation.

Introduction: Purpose of the Symposium

(Hellgard Rauh, Ph.D., Universität Bielefeld W.-Germany)

Symposia at SRCD have commonly been prepared either by people from the same research institution or by people working on the same or simular projects. As far as I know, this is the first time that developmentalists from outside the U.S. or Canada have tried to give an account of the status of their country's child research at SRCD. Thus our symposium might give the meeting an "international flair".

For the American audience this will be an opportunity to get to know research which is not easily accessible in the English language, to see how American influence is received and transformed in a different culture, and to learn about approaches to research problems that might be slightly different from their own.

The purpose of our coming here is manifold. In the first place, it is supposed to be the first step towards furthering developmental research and training in Germany, and, second we hope to learn from you how to go about reaching this aim. Third we hope to establish close contacts with our American colleagues.

Recently, the VW Foundation which financed our stay in Denver, and the German Science Foundation approved of supporting developmental psychology in Germany. Within the next three years, the following kinds of endeavors stand a fair chance to receive financial support: international contacts, such as workshops, research seminars, exchange of researchers, and research advisors, and international research projects.

To benefit from the experiences of American developmentalists it would be helpful for us to discuss with you.

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(1) how to effectively improve training in child development
(2) how to improve mutual information exchange
(3) how to improve co-operation in research projects
(4) how to benefit mutually from the similarities as well as from the peculiarities of developmental research and theorizing in both countries.

In order to give you a fair basis for discussion we will first present a short overview on the history and the present status of developmental research and training in Germany. There will then follow four examples of developmental research currently being carried out in our country.

These were chosen as specimens of diverse research areas. They also represent relatively large projects - there are only few more of similar size. And they represent different kinds of support. The language study is one of several projects, financed by the VW Foundation to study the basis for elementary and primary education as well as to develop diagnostic instruments and curricula. The study on parent-child relations is part of a "special research area" (Sonderforschungsgebiet) investigating socialization processes; it is supported by the German Science Foundation. The other two studies are University projects, one of which (on cognitive styles) represents typical research performed by supervised students, usually without special support - which is still the most common kind of research in our country.

Symposium: Child Development Research in the Federal Republic of Germany
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History and Status of Developmental Research in Germany
(and the German speaking countries in Europe).

(Hellgard Rauh, Ph.D. Universität Bielefeld, W-Germany)

At the onset of scientific psychology in Germany the developmental demension was an integral part of general psychological thinking and experimentation. This can be shown, for instance, in the voluminous scientific work of Wilhelm Wundt and other early German psychologists. In the years 1918 - 1933, two thirds of all contributions to the German Monographs of the J. of applied Psychology were either completely developmentally oriented or at least relevant to developmental issues. Later on the percentage declined considerably (Groffmann).

The idea of development has two different origins: history and philosophy on the one hand and biology on the other. Darwinian ideas, for example, heavily influenced early psychological thinking (e.g., Freud's).

Quite often we find that the dimension of development was not restricted to child psychology, but also led scientists to draw parallels to differences and changes in species, in cultures and societies, and, in normals - vs - abnormals. Even acts, perceptual processes and thought processes, occuring within an extremely short period of time, were studied from a genetic point of view which has become known under the term "microgenesis". This general genetic theorizing and experimenting was held especially by the Wholistic Psychologists in Leipzig (Ganzheitspsychologie) who strongly influenced such people as Heinz Werner. Even today this idea has been taken up and followed further by H.D. Schmidt in East Berlin.

After a first broad theoretical outline of psychology with a strong genetic emphasis, there came a time of collecting empirical evidence, first on infants and lateron on school-age children and adolescents. Some important child research institutes were founded

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at about the same time as the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Geneva; these are connected with the names of Bühler in Vienna, Stern in Hamburg, and Kroh in Berlin.

The following main characteristics of this flourishing of developmental research may appear as being quite modern.

(1) The genetic principle was accepted as a general principle to be applied to microscopic as well as to macroscopic changes.
Thus, for instance, comparative psychology and ethology were studied extensively by developmental psychologists.

(2) A second characteristic of this period was the attempt at building a general theory comprising all aspects of development over the entire liefe-span.

(3) A third feature was the search for developmental stages, levels, layers or rhythms - again an approach which seems to come into favor again nowadays.

(4) Development was mostly conceived of as a change in structure rather than a linear, quantitative change, which provided for sudden breaks and alterations.

Furthermore, the content areas which attracted developmental researchers at that time might well have been taken from a recent journal dealing with child development - if you add research on learning and social and communicative behavior. These areas were predominantly related to cognition, (perception, imagery, and thought) to personality, (temperament, self-image and future-time perspective); and to the interrelation between biological and psychological development.

During and after World War II there was an almost total breakdown of developmental research in Germany. Many scientist emigrated to the U.S. or England. Of these, Ch. & K. Bühler, Heinz Werner, Kurt Lewin, W. Köhler, Anna Freud and C. & W. Stern are the most well-known.

After World War II, behavioral problems with post-war children and youth became so urgent that child-guidance clinics and clinical psychology, influenced by similar institutions in the U.S., emerged and became predominant in psychological research, as now is also true for social psychology.
The only noteworthy developmental research endeavors of the early post-war era were 3 longitudinal studies: one by Gottschaldt on twins (1936-1968); one by Thomae et al. on post-war children begun in 1951 and influenced by the large longitudinal studies in the U.S.; and a third one by Meili in Switzerland, begun in 1950, with infants.

It was not before 1950 that psychology slowly recovered from its World-War II break-down. At this time a rather general training program in psychology - leading to what may be equivalent to a master's degree - was installed. Developmental psychology, however, was not more than one out of several different undergraduate subjects. Due to increasing differentiation of psychology, new conceptions of psychological training have recently been developed. They will eventually lead to specialized graduate and post-graduate training programs, one of which could well be in developmental psychology or human development.

So far however, there are no academic institutions specializing in human development, although a rapidly increasing demand for such specialists can be inferred. This can be seen - among other things - from the growing number of publications in the field.

So much for the historical considerations and the training situation.

Let me now turn to the present status of developmental research in Germany.
Research projects pertaining to the field of human development show a slight increase - as a first reflection of the heightened interest. To give you an impression of what is going on in our country, we have selected four projects. Although each of these projects concentrates on different research problems, you may perhaps notice some common features which I believe to be characteristic for today's developmental research in Germany.

These are:

(1) Sensitivity for theoretical conceptualizations, their methodological realization and meta-theoretical reflections

(2) A strong inclination towards cognitive-developmental theories under a life-span perspective

(3) A relatively broad scope of research with complex units of behavior under study

(4) An orientation towards socially and educationally relevant real-life situations

(5) Interest in personality development closely related to what had formerly been called "character formation". As a consequence,

(6) Emphasis on studying the courses of individual development and their antecedents or conditions under a differential perspective.

Only few projects pertaining to child development are as large as those to be presented here, and the number of psychologists calling themselves developmentalists is still small - although hopefully increasing. The most common experimental subjects in Germany are school and nursery-school children, since changes and reformsin the German educational system called for information on the developmental bases and conditions as well as for the long-term developmental outcomes of new educational institutions, systems, anddevices. Accordingly, most research relates to cognitive and social-cognitive development (visual differentiation, attention, memory, intelligence and problem solving, sequences of concept formation andconcrete and formal operations, role concepts, roletaking, etc.). Language development and language socialization are areas of broad interest for educators as is also true for the development of the achievement motivation or the conditions for creativity. The relationships of children's

adolescents to their parents and teachers, parental socialization styles and their impact on the development of their children are being studied at several universities. SPRANGER's Psychology of the Adolescent still seems to stimulate research on self-concepts, ideals and life-plans of children and youth as well as on their familial, social, moral, vocational, and political interests, values and anticipations.

Some claim that educational psychology dominates developmental research in Germany, and there are some tendencies towards more independence from educational issues. This may have also been one reason for the lack of infant research by psychologists after the war and the fact that gerontology is a very new field in developmental research. The obstacles impeding interdiscipinary research in infancy, however, seem to be even more resistant than those relating to research on old age.

This short outline of the history and present situation of developmental research and training in Germany is supposed to give the background for the four studies selected for this symposium and the search of German developmentalists for international cooperation.

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